



**St Michael and All Angels
Amersham-on-the-Hill**

Newsletter

February 2010

Millennium Lectures in 2010

This year's three lectures give every indication of living up to the high standards set over the past decade.

**Thursday March 18
'Til Faith Us Do Part?**

Presented by Rabbi Dr Jonathan Romain, writer, broadcaster and minister of Maidenhead Synagogue in Berkshire.

What happens when people fall in love across the religious divide – be it Jew and Christian, Hindu and Muslim, believer and non-believer? What are the issues such couples have to face, along with their family and also their community? As Britain grows increasingly multi-faith, Rabbi Dr Jonathan Romain, an expert in this field, explores both the trends and the myths of mixed-faith families.

**Tuesday June 29
Communicating across divides – reflection on an authentic language of the Spirit**

Presented by Harvey Gillman, who was outreach secretary for British Quakers for 18 years.

Harvey Gillman writes and lectures on spirituality, language and how we can use difference compassionately and with integrity. His books include: *A Light that is Shining*, an introductory book on British Quakers; *A Minority of One*; and *Consider the Blackbird*.

**Thursday September 16 –
God beyond Church**

Presented by Dr. Sheila Cassidy.

As a young doctor, Sheila Cassidy was imprisoned and tortured for treating a wounded revolutionary in Pinochet's Chile. After her release she became an outspoken advocate for human rights and the author of *Audacity to Believe*. She wrote about her experiences of insomnia and depression and her attempts to found a religious order for women in *Made for Laughter*. She developed new approaches to the care of young cancer patients, before training as a psychotherapist. 'God beyond Church' is the title of a third book that she is in the process of writing.

Worship – Sundays

8 am **Said Eucharist**
10 am **Sung Eucharist** (*Coffee afterwards*)
'2gether' 2nd Sunday.

Tuesdays

10.30 am Said Eucharist

Alternate Wednesdays

10.30 am *Praise & Play.
3.45 pm *Praise & Play Plus.

* see diary (page 6) for details

Mondays - Saturdays

8.30 am Morning Prayer

Saturdays

3 pm Saturday Slot 1st Saturday

The Church is usually open each morning from 8 am for anyone who wishes to meditate or spend time in quiet.

Jo Harrington's report on the last Millennium Lecture, given by Brian Thorne in December on *The challenge of the Mystics to contemporary Christianity*, appears on page 4.



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REFLECTION

What did it all mean?

Every year the rational part of me starts asking whether the beautiful, familiar Christmas stories can really be true. Did a woman in the last week of her pregnancy really ride on a donkey all the way from Nazareth to Bethlehem? Did she really give birth in an outhouse? Did a group of shepherds really have some kind of mystical experience that made them go and find that baby? Did a group of intellectuals really follow a star all the way from some far-off land to find this baby? None of this seems remotely probable.

Yet these are surely the wrong questions to ask. Matthew and Luke weren't academic historians. They, like most of the Biblical writers, were writing something more like poetry than factual history. The important thing to ask is what fundamental truths were they trying to convey through these stories. What do they tell us about the nature of God as they had come to understand it through their experiences with Jesus? Far more extraordinary than the stories of stables and shepherds is the fact that they could imagine God coming into human life, not in majesty and power but as a helpless baby, born not in one of the world's great cities but in an obscure corner of an obscure province. And that the first people to welcome him were a group of poor, illiterate peasants and the next people to welcome him were a group of leading intellectuals.

There are truths that are too deep to be conveyed by simple words. I am reminded of the story of Pavlova who was asked to explain the meaning of the dance that she had just performed. She replied: "If I could have said it I wouldn't have bothered to dance it." Yet we continue to treat the Bible as though it was journalism or history rather than a poetic attempt to illuminate truths too deep for words.

What's important about Christmas is not the details of those familiar stories but the dazzling truth they try to convey, of a vulnerable God who is not remote from human life and who is there for everyone.

Our Vision Statement

As a Christian community, we seek to engage with the world around us and to be a place of welcome and acceptance for all on a journey to God – believers, doubters and those who are seeking.

Exciting list of speakers for Lent

A remarkable series of talks has been arranged for this Lent by Churches Together in Chesham. Churches on the Hill, Amersham are encouraging us to attend these talks which will take place on Wednesday evenings in Lent at 8 pm at Broadway Baptist Church in Chesham.

Wednesday February 24 – Fr Timothy Radcliffe OP

Fr Radcliffe is the author of *What's the point of being a Christian?*, the book studied in last Spring's course at St Michael's.

Wednesday March 3 – Jonathan Edwards, General Secretary of the Baptist Union.

As General Secretary Jonathan Edwards is the leader of the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

Wednesday March 10 – Lucy Winkett, Canon Precentor of St Paul's Cathedral.

Lucy Winkett gave one of the

Millennium Lectures at St Michael's on the place of faith in education.

Wednesday March 17 – Debra Green, Director of City Links, City Links seeks to promote partnerships for the spiritual and social transformation of communities.

Wednesday March 24 – John Bell of the Iona Community.

John Bell leads the Wild Goose Publications group which produces so much exciting worship material and he is the author of several hymns that we use regularly at St Michael's.

Here is Love



Jonathan Edwards



Iona Abbey

Living Hope: Green Churches, Green Schools March 6, 10.00 am to 4.00 pm. Cost £5

A day conference for anyone connected with a church or school and interested in how we carry out our mission in an age of environmental change.

The conference will feature a panel on "reasons for hope" with leading theologians Dave Bookless, Paula Clifford, Sean McDonagh, and Chris Sunderland; information on the wider context of climate change (yes, we know that convincing people right now that large portions of the earth are actually warmer than usual might be a bit tough!) and workshops on everything from how you can save energy (and money) in your church and home, how to answer questions about the science of climate change, spirituality in an age of climate change, what the outcome of Copenhagen really means, how churches are working with local community groups to effect real change, how schools

can become "greener" and more. Paul Chandler, CEO of Traidcraft, will lead a workshop on Fair Trade and sustainable consumption and production. There will also be a marketplace with materials from agencies, community groups and environmental service providers.

The conference is being held in church, school and parish hall of Great Missenden, where they have already received grants to install different forms of alternative energy sources and are working on sustainability. It's meant for everyone in the Thames Valley. For more information see the web site www.ccow.org.uk

Compline in Lent



The lovely ancient office of Compline will as usual be said in the Lady Chapel at 7.30 pm during Passion Week and Holy Week.

Monday – Friday March 22 – 26 and

Monday – Wednesday March 29 – 31.

If you would like to lead it one evening please speak to Hazel Adamson (721409)

Fall deep in the silence

Jo Harrington reports on the Millennium Lecture given by Brian Thorne in December.

Don't move! Don't break this precious silence! That was the atmosphere in a packed St. Michael's as Brian Thorne concluded his Millennium Lecture about the Challenge of the Mystics to Contemporary Christians. In his own person, Professor Thorne was able to convey to us the stillness and sense of divine mystery which he values in the church's mystical tradition.

Unfortunately, he said, the Church today is perceived as

irrelevant because it conceals with embarrassment the jewels in its own treasure house, "jewels" such as Meister Eckhart, St. John of the Cross and the more recent Teilhard de Chardin. These are our fellow pilgrims on the path of belief, he said, who could open wide the door of the Church. Instead, we find a Church which "clangs the door shut."

Brian Thorne spoke about his own experience of over-prescriptive and noisy church

services. Recent studies, however, have shown that people value a liturgy which allows for a subjective experience of union with God. And in popular tradition there is still a widespread desire to identify with the culture of Christian baptism, church weddings and funerals, which encapsulate the whole of life. If the decline in church attendance is to be reversed, "The Church needs to give great attention to this fact."

Today's mystics do need the Church but the Church also needs the mystics. In them, said Professor Thorne, the Church has its ambassadors to sound the clarion call. He wants to belong to a church which is proud of its "jewels", (as, exceptionally, Julian of Norwich is valued), a Church where silence and meditation are present, where we "run the risk of falling in love with God."

Our Persecuted Church Family in

EGYPT

Egypt has had a Christian presence since almost the very beginning of Christianity. Today many of the believers live on the margins of society, as refuse recyclers and other menial jobs. Permission to build new churches, and to renovate or repair old buildings is rarely approved, and where such work does go ahead it is often violently opposed by local people. Christian girls are sometimes abducted, forced to convert to Islam and made to marry a Muslim man. Christians who have been converted from Islam are denied the right to change their Identity cards to



register this fact. In the last four months there have been several attacks on churches while people were worshipping (one on Christmas Eve left six worshippers and a security guard dead), and homes and shops. Vehicles have been looted and torched.

Pray for our Christian brothers and sisters in Egypt that they may stand firm in the face of intimidation and harassment; and pray that the authorities would uphold the rights of Christians to fair and honest treatment as full citizens of Egypt.

Ash Wednesday February 17

There will be two Communion services in the Lady Chapel on Ash Wednesday.

10.30 am

Celebrant Peter Binns
Preacher Diana Glover

8 pm

Celebrant Andrew Busby
Preacher Diana Glover

**We welcome in Baptism
Anna Lucy Whibley
Matthew Fernando Rodman**

**We give thanks for the lives of
Violet Winsor
Betty Page
Kathleen Smythe
Brenda Bowen
Dorothy May
Phyllis Baker**

Lent Appeal for Liuli

We are once again invited to support Dr Sam Ndimbo and the work at St Anne's Hospital, Liuli, this Lent.

Those of you who have met Sam Ndimbo on his various visits to St Michael's will know what a remarkable person he is – highly intelligent, totally committed to the people of his remote region of Tanzania and with an infectious sense of joy. Though Sam has now handed over responsibility for St Anne's Hospital to his brother Daniel he continues to work in the local clinic attached to his home and to be our main link with the hospital.

The needs remain great:

- Daniel is the only doctor at the hospital, which serves some 200,000 people up and down the lakeshore. As a result he is permanently on call and always exhausted. There is a desperate need for funds to train extra medical staff. The temptation is always for trained people to leave such a remote area so

those offered training will be asked to pledge themselves to work at St Anne's for at least five years.

- There is an urgent need of a fridge in which to store blood samples. At the moment donated blood has to be given to a patient immediately. This means that it is not possible to test for HIV because HIV takes three months to show in the blood. There is always the danger that a blood transfusion will lead to the transfer of HIV infection.

- A few years ago members of St Michael's raised the money to buy mosquito nets for all the hospital beds. But natural wear means that some have developed holes and need to be replaced.

- And there are no bedside cupboards in the hospital. Patients have nowhere to put their things other than the floor. Buying these locally will put money into the local economy.



Shrove Tuesday

Come for pancakes
February 16, 12.30 to 2 pm
St Michael and All Angels
All invited
Activities for children

Please put any gift you feel moved to offer in the envelope attached to this newsletter (or pick one up from the letters table in church if you receive the newsletter electronically) and put it in the Easter Sunday collection. Any cheques should be made payable to *Friends of St Anne's Hospital, Liuli, not to St Michael's*.

And, if you are a taxpayer, do please sign the Gift Aid form and put it in the envelope, enabling the Friends to claim back the tax that you have paid. This really is a very significant contribution from the Inland Revenue.

If you'll be away over the Easter weekend please give your envelope to Marjorie Redpath.

Please note that the APCM (the annual general meeting of St Michael's) will be on:

Sunday April 25

It will be at 10 am in the Hall and will be followed by a simple, said Communion service.

If you are not on the Electoral Roll (ie a full, voting member of St Michael's) but would like to be, please speak to Sylvia Flynn (725108) by the end of March.



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DIARY

February 2010

Regular Weekly Activities		
Sundays	8 am	Said Eucharist
	10 am	Sung Eucharist
Mondays	8.30 – 8.55 am	Morning Prayer. Lady Chapel.
Tuesdays	8.30 – 8.55 am	Morning Prayer. Lady Chapel.
	10.30 am	Said Eucharist. Lady Chapel
Wednesdays	8.30 – 8.55 am	Morning Prayer. Lady Chapel.
	7.00 – 8.15 pm	Choir Practice
Thursdays	8.30 – 8.55 am	Morning Prayer. Lady Chapel.
Fridays	8.30 – 8.55 am	Morning Prayer. Lady Chapel
Saturdays	8.30 – 8.55 am	Morning Prayer. Lady Chapel.
Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays.		10 am – 12 noon. Wheeler Coffee Pot. Wheeler Room.

The Church is usually open each morning from 8 am for anyone who wishes to meditate or spend time in quiet.

Other activities in February		
Tuesday	Feb 2	LUNCH BREAK. Scottish Songs for Burns-tide. Free Church, 1.10 pm
Wednesday	Feb 3	<i>Praise & Play.</i> Lady Chapel. 10.30 am Healing and Wholeness. Lady Chapel. 4 pm – 6 pm
Saturday	Feb 6	<i>Saturday Slot.</i> 3 pm
Sunday	Feb 7	2nd Sunday before Lent
Tuesday	Feb 9	LUNCH BREAK. Dealing with suffering. Free Church. 1.10 pm
Wednesday	Feb 10	<i>Praise & Play Plus.</i> Lady Chapel. 3.45 pm
Sunday	Feb 14	Sunday before Lent. 2gether. Communion. Free Church. 6 pm
Monday	Feb 15	Not One for Lunch. Lady Chapel. 12.45 pm
Tuesday	Feb 16	<i>No 10.30 Communion service</i> Pancake Party. 12.30 pm – 2 pm LUNCH BREAK. Baroque Recital by Stromenti. Free Church. 1.10 pm
Wednesday	Feb 17	ASH WEDNESDAY. 10.30 am Communion Lady Chapel 8 pm Communion. Lady Chapel.
Sunday	Feb 21	1st Sunday in Lent.
Tuesday	Feb 23	LUNCH BREAK. Some Bible Prayers. Free Church. 1.10 pm
Wednesday	Feb 24	<i>Praise & Play Plus.</i> Lady Chapel. 3.45 pm Lent Lecture – Fr Timothy Radcliffe OP
Sunday	Feb 28	2nd Sunday in Lent Junior Drama Club. Acting Skills. Hall. 2.30 pm

Our next issue . . .
Our next issue will appear on **Sunday February 28**. Please get your contributions to us by Sunday February 14.